

by advocating values but not engaging in religious worship.

The question then becomes, why would any faith-based group want to participate with these limitations. The answer is that the funding is always going to be there and therefore will we continue to discriminate or will we open the process and ferret out discrimination.

Charitable Choice is about funding affective public services, not religious worship. It explicitly states that no direct funds "may be expended for sectarian worship, instruction or proselytization." While securing this separation, it also allows "conversion-centered" groups to participate via vouchers. This is nothing new in Federal law. Since 1990, low-income parents have used vouchers to enroll their children in thoroughly religious child-care services.

This voucher option is critical for beneficiaries because when helping needy Americans one size does not fit all.

Charitable Choice offers assistance in both the form of vouchers (to recipients) and grants (to organizations) to fund civic assistance programs. This variety expands service to needy Americans because it allows them to participate in a program that suits them without respect to religion.

The President established the office of Faith-based and Community Initiatives, which is the first of its kind, to correct this glaring discrepancy. The purpose of this office is to devise a constitutional means by which religious organizations are brought to the table and allowed to compete for Federal moneys regardless of their belief system.

This is consistent with the President's objective to unleash private money for public good. It establishes charitable giving incentives for taxpayers to increase the level of money given directly to public service organizations.

Charitable Choice allows faith-based and secular civic organizations to compete on the basis of the same criteria. Charitable Choice asks the question, "What can you do?" rather than "Who are you?" It holds both the religious and secular civic organizations to the same standard: Results.

It is our responsibility to expand the range of care for people in crisis and Charitable Choice is an innovative way of achieving that goal. It is a way to empower that which is small and holistic.

Americans deserve a variety of alternatives; the goal is not to favor one group or belief system over another but to simply level the playing field such that any effective social service is made eligible for Federal moneys already designated for public services. It doesn't favor any religious organization; it only ends some of the burdens that often impede them. Surely this is something that every American can support.

Mr. HALL of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SCOTT).

Mr. SCOTT. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to the rule. It is clear that the majority is avoiding the amendment process because they cannot defend the underlying bill. I offered an amendment that was rejected in Rules that would have required agencies when making funding decisions to consider objective merits when they consider the proposals.

Now, I would like to ask, if you are not using objective merits, are the Fed-

eral officials supposed to just pick and choose between the religions based on the religion they like the best?

In addition to discriminating in the grant process, it prevents amendments on the issue of whether we ought to roll back civil rights by 60 years. The Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, the NAACP, a host of other organizations, oppose this bill because of what it does to civil rights.

We have heard we are not changing any present laws. Well, if you are not changing any present laws, you do not need a bill. This changes present laws, and that is the major controversy in the bill. We have not been able to discriminate in Federal contracts based on religion for decades. You can under this bill.

In fact, this bill is not about small organizations, and it is not about faith organizations. Any program that can get funded under this bill can get funded today, except those sponsored by organizations who insist on discriminating based on religion.

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We ought to have a process where we can debate the question of discrimination in this bill. We ought to have a rule that allows that; this rule does not, and therefore, this rule ought to be rejected.

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. SOUDER), my distinguished colleague.

Mr. SOUDER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding me this time.

First, I want to make a comment on the rule itself, which is this debate. The gentleman from Virginia just commented that he was frustrated that the rule does not allow for the ability to offer amendments. I cast a very difficult vote the other day. I do not favor campaign finance reform, but I believe that our leadership had been trying to work out a way for Shays-Meehan to have a straight up-or-down vote. In fact, this is what we need on charitable choice and this is what we need in health care.

I believe this rule is fair. Most Members of this House, in effect, both on this side and on the other side, argued for a rule that gave people who are arguing a position the ability to have a vote on their bill, and I believe this bill falls into the same category as campaign finance reform, the Fletcher medical bill, and other bills. When we have these conflicts where there are two clear sides, we ought to have straight up-or-down votes on those bills.

Secondly, while the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SCOTT) is technically correct that this bill is different, it actually protects current religious exemptions. It does not change the religious freedom law. What we have done in this country is said that people who want to preserve their religious freedom are not eligible, even if they do not pros-

elytize, even if they are just distributing soup to the hungry or if they are building a home for somebody who is homeless or if they are helping somebody who is dying of AIDS. Even if they do no evangelization, even if they do not pray with that individual, they are not allowed to build the house unless they change their entire religion or basic beliefs. That is what religious freedom is in this country, and that is what this bill is trying to uphold with current procedures as to how we do charitable work in this country so as to not step on religious freedom, and this bill attempts to rectify that.

Mr. HALL of Ohio. Mr. Speaker I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. CLEMENT).

Mr. CLEMENT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time. I might say about the gentleman, he is a champion, not only in the United States but worldwide, when it comes to hunger and fighting hunger.

I rise today in support of the rule, in support of H.R. 7, The Community Solutions Act of 2001. The heart of the so-called faith-based program would allow religious organizations to bid for Federal funds to feed the hungry, fight juvenile crime, assist older Americans, aid students, and help welfare recipients find work, among other charitable activities. I applaud the tremendous work that faith-based organizations have done to provide much-needed services to our communities.

Organizations such as the Nashville Rescue Mission in my district offer a hand up to those in need without any influx of Federal dollars. This legislation would give the mission and other groups the opportunity to compete for such funds should they so desire. These important faith-based service programs no doubt play an extremely important role in transforming lives as they daily reach out to the less fortunate in Tennessee and across the Nation. The time has come to recognize these unique entities by passing charitable choice legislation.

Charitable choice simply means equal access by faith-based organizations when they compete with other organizations for Federal social service contracts. Nothing is guaranteed. They must compete with everyone else and demonstrate their proven effectiveness in providing basic social services before they will be awarded Federal grants. Charitable choice is not a new idea. Existing charitable choice programs and national programs across the country have benefited thousands of people.

Faith-based organizations have long been on the front lines of helping our communities' most needy and broken. They have taken on the challenges of society that others have left behind. It is time that the Federal Government recognized the work they do and assist them in meeting these challenges. Let us improve our delivery system; let us support this bill and pass it.

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1½ minutes to the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. GUTKNECHT).